PLAN

OF A

PHILOLOGICAL AND SYNONYMICAL

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PROLEPSIS PHILOLOGIÆ ANGLICANÆ;

OR,

PLAN

OF A

PHILOLOGICAL AND SYNONYMICAL DICTIONARY

OF THE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

By BENJAMIN DAWSON, LL. D.
RECTOR OF BURGH IN SUFFOLK.

ME QUIDEM, QUANQUAM IN ALIIS NON ASPERNOR, NUNQUAM MAGNOPERE CEPIT ELOQUENTIÆ STUDIUM; SED NESCIO QUO PACTO MAGIS SEMPER ARRISIT CORDATA, QUAM PICTA FUCIS ORATIO, DUM ABSINT SORDES, DUM MIHI SENTENTIAM ANIMI NON INCOMMODE REPRÆSENTAT.

Erasmi Adagia.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

ALEXANDER LORD LOUGHBOROUGH,

LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR OF GREAT BRITAIN

AND ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST HONOURABLE PRIVY COUNCIL,

IN TESTIMONY OF THE AUTHOR'S PERFECT ESTEEM

AND GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF MANY EARLY MARKS OF FAVOUR AND KIND

ATTENTION SHEWN HIM,

THIS WORK

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S MOST OBEDIENT

AND OBLIGED SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

EDINBURGH, MAY 20, 1797.

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PROLEPSIS
PHILOLOGIÆ ANGLICANÆ.

CHAP. I.

Words perfectly ſynonymous not found in the ſame language.

ALL languages have this imperfection, that they want words to expreſs certain ideas. No language can be in the other extreme, ſo as to have a redundancy of words. For, as words were invented to expreſs ideas, more words were not invented than there were ideas to be expreſſed by them. And, as words are ſubſequent to ideas and occur not immediately on the acquiſition of new ideas, but are introduced gradually into a language, requiring time and uſage to fix their ſignification and gain them a reception, there will ever be a deficiency of words to anſwer certain ideas. For new ideas are almoſt inceſſantly riſing in the mind and wait not for words, or other ſigns, to communicate them, but are neceſſarily and inſtantaneouſly excited by new objects. Writers notwithſtanding frequently go into the other extreme, multiplying words without neceſſity, and without ideas to correſpond to them.

That this ſhould be, is both poſſible and alſo very eaſy to be accounted for, For, whereas language is founded in nature, and

therefore in its frame reſpects human neceſſity, convenience and uſe; books and converſation do not always follow nature, nor copy her with chaſteneſs and accuracy. Nature, in her ſupplies, is ever uniform and conſiſtent as well as bountiful; but art guides not men, in the uſe of them, invariably and with certainty to the end for which they were afforded: nor ought it to be matter of wonder that they, who are daily abuſing and ſpoiling by art, ignorance, or wantonneſs, the beſt gifts of nature, ſhould make equally free with her in this caſe.

But even from the paucity itſelf of words in a language this verboſity may be partly accounted for. For, finding no proper term for an idea, we naturally attempt to make ourſelves underſtood by the uſe of ſeveral words akin in ſignification, though not any one of them, nor all put together, may be ſufficiently ſignificative of the idea to be conveyed; ſo that a multiplicity of words in expreſſing oneſelf, is far from being a proof of too great copiouſneſs of a language (which cannot be) but either, that the writer is inelegant and careleſs, or that the language is not ſufficiently copious to enable him to expreſs his ideas with preciſion.

From this defect, reſpecting the proportion of words to ideas, neceſſarily inherent in all languages, it follows—That no language has more words than one to expreſs the ſame idea by; and hence no two words in the ſame language are *perfectly*, or in every reſpect, ſynonymous.

CHAP. II.

Objections to the argument of the preceding chapter obviated.

IT may be thought that the obſervation made in the foregoing chapter, viz. "That no two words in the ſame language are perfectly ſynonymous," or have exactly the ſame ſignification, cannot be admitted on the reaſon there aſſigned; that it will hold only in the *firſt* and *ſimpleſt* of all languages, in forming which pure nature may be ſuppoſed to have directed men; but that the *more modern* languages no more than modern manners, are the offspring of nature. Shall we exclude fancy, whim, and caprice from any ſhare in the conſtruction of the former, while we acknowledge their daily influence upon the latter? And will not this account for the poſſibility, at leaſt, of our language in particular having a ſuperfluity of words; eſpecially, if we take into the account the various languages from which we have ſo freely borrowed?

We cannot deny, that theſe have had a conſiderable effect on language. But, whatever other effect they may have had, they could not have this, viz. to introduce more words than were neceſſary to expreſs our ideas with preciſion. For, let whim and caprice be ſuppoſed to prevail ever ſo much, words muſt have been invented, or introduced into a language for ſome end or other. The human mind in every act, fooliſh as well as wiſe, is not deſtitute of a motive to it. Now, no one who wanted to expreſs an idea, would think of doing it by any other word than that which he knew to be in uſe; becauſe no new word could anſwer his intention. If he

would communicate his thoughts, he muſt uſe ſuch expreſſions or words as will convey them to others; that is, ſuch as he knows, or ſuppoſes at leaſt, they underſtand the force of.

If there be, therefore, in our language any words of exactly the ſame ſignification, they could not have been introduced with the view of expreſſing the very ſame idea. Some other cauſe of their introduction and obtaining a place in the language muſt be aſſigned. But, if the expreſſion of ideas was not the motive for the introduction of words perfectly ſynonymous, there remains no other conceivable motive for it, than to vary the ſound occaſionally by which the ſame idea had been uſed to be expreſſed.

This may be thought ſufficient to account for the thing, and to be no unnatural ſuppoſition. Is it not, it may be aſked, very natural in the expreſſion of our ideas and ſentiments to make choice of words ſometimes for their ſounding better, forming more agreeable cadencies, rounding one's periods, or "that the ſound," as the Poet has it, "may echo to the ſenſe?" Do not the different kinds of compoſition ſeem to require ſuch a choice? Is it eaſy to conceive how our own language, without a variety of words of the ſame import, could anſwer, in point of elegance and propriety of diction at leaſt, the different views of the poet, the orator, the hiſtorian; or be adapted to the different ſtyle and manner which each of theſe may occaſionally uſe in ſeveral parts of the ſame compoſition, as well as in the ſeveral ſpecies of compoſition which are proper to each? What a large field of variety, in the choice of words merely to pleaſe the ear and gain attention, ſeems to lie before theſe three ſorts of writers, from the epic poet down to the epigrammatiſt,—from the orator in the ſenate-houſe, pulpit, or at the bar

bar to the mountebank on the ſtage,—and from the hiſtorian (properly ſo ſtyled) to the mere writer of novels and romance!

Let us ſee then, whether this will account for the exiſtence of words perfectly ſynonymous in one and the ſame language.

I would maintain that the only end of words is to *expreſs ideas*. On the other hand it is ſuppoſed, that certain words are deſigned to anſwer another end, which is, not to convey ideas peculiar to each, but only to *vary the ſound* by which the ſame idea uſed to be conveyed.

Now it will be readily granted me, that words were *originally* invented for the purpoſe of communicating our ſentiments and ideas. A language then, conſtituted on this plan (as every language muſt *at firſt* have been) would have no words in it that were perfectly ſynonymous.

Let us then take our own language in this its firſt ſtate, and enquire how the ſuppoſed ſynonymous words now in uſe could be introduced. They were either *invented*, or elſe *borrowed* from ſome other language. If they were invented, it muſt have been for the ſake of ſomething beſide ſound; otherwiſe they could not be introduced into language, being in that caſe no part of it, any more than ſounds produced by an inſtrument of muſic can be conſidered as a part of language.

This, it may be ſaid, is not ſuppoſed; becauſe, beſides being calculated to excite particular ſounds, they ſtand for *ideas* too, viz. the very ſame ideas for which other words, before invented, ſtand.

But

But it has been ſhewn above that this could not be; becauſe no perſon, who wanted to expreſs an idea with exactneſs, would ever attempt to do it by any other word than that which he knew already exactly expreſſed it. Nor indeed could he poſſibly make himſelf underſtood by a new invented term to which no idea was affixed by others, and get it received into the language with the very ſame idea to it which all but himſelf had affixed to another term. It cannot therefore be by *invention* that words perfectly alike in ſignification are uſed for the ſake of varying the ſound.

Might not this be in the other way then, viz. by *borrowing* words from other languages in order to expreſs our ideas in a manner which would be more agreeable to the ear? I think not. For, though there is not the ſame difficulty attending this ſuppoſition as the other, (inaſmuch as a perſon may make himſelf underſtood by uſing a word not of his own invention, but from a language known to others) yet, if we attend to the principle on which the choice of words for their effect on the ear depends, we ſhall find, that no words are choſen for the ſound merely, without an intention at the ſame time of varying the ideas which they convey.

For why, of two different words ſuppoſed to be perfectly ſynonymous, is one choſen rather than the other? If for its better ſound, or for its being of freer and more eaſy pronunciation, on *all* occaſions, the other word muſt be rejected and become obſolete. It can ſerve no purpoſe in the language, and therefore muſt be loſt. If in *certain* inſtances only it is preferable to the old one on account of its ſound, let us ſee how this comes about. On what principle is this preference founded?

In muſic the ſame note may be variouſly expreſſed, either by a ſofter or louder tone on the ſame inſtrument, or by different tones peculiar to the different inſtruments or voices by which the note is expreſſed. If we had ſingle words to expreſs each different tone by, thoſe words, though ſtanding for one and the ſame note, could not be eſteemed perfectly ſynonymous. They would convey different ideas, though they referred to the ſame note; and in expreſſing that note one would be more properly choſen than another, according to the different tone intended to be emitted. Nor indeed in that caſe would the choice be made merely for the ſound of the word, but for the ſake of the idea affixed to it. If the pronunciation of a word, for inſtance, to which we had affixed the idea of a certain note ſounded on a *trumpet*, ſhould be more like in ſound to the ſame note beat upon a *drum*, yet we ſhould never think for that reaſon of expreſſing the ſound of the latter by the word which in the language was appropriated to give us the idea of the ſound of the former. This would be to pervert the very end of language, and to introduce the greateſt confuſion among our ideas.

Indeed, the better that the words of any language ſuit, in point of pronunciation, with the quality of the object they repreſent, the language itſelf is ſo much the better. But it is an invariable and indiſpenſable rule, that ſenſe is not, in any caſe whatſoever, to be ſacrificed to ſound. It is the ſenſe or ſentiment, after all, that ſupports language; and, whenever this is made to yield to ſound, the language always ſuffers from it.

Inſtances of this we have in abundance in every ſpecies of compoſition; but more eſpecially in poetry and that ſort of verſification which is in rhyme, or which is ſet to muſic. Hence it is that ſo much fault has been found with rhyme, being too often admitted,

for

for the jingle's ſake, to the prejudice of the language from the loſs, or variation at leaſt, of the idea or ſentiment which would otherwiſe have been conveyed. The language of the beſt opera that ever was written is for the ſame reaſon hardly tolerable without the muſic and ſcenery; while a well-written play is read, in ſeveral parts of it, with more effect on the imagination and paſſions, than it is capable of by being repreſented on the ſtage. Indeed to adapt ſome plays—ſome of the fineſt too of our inimitable Shakeſpeare—to *ſcenical* repreſentation, is to ſpoil them in their ſublimeſt paſſages and moſt eſſential parts of the compoſition.

We may conclude then, that no two words in any language can be perfectly ſynonymous, but that every word, whether originally peculiar to the language, or introduced into it from ſome other, is intended to expreſs an idea different from what is affixed to any other word, or (which amounts to the ſame thing) to expreſs it ſome how differently in degree, extent, limitation, or other circumſtance.

If, after all that has been ſaid, it ſhould be ſtill thought, that ſome words are perfectly ſynonymous, and introduced into a language merely to relieve the ear by varying the ſound, and avoiding the frequent repetition of the ſame word, where the idea happens to occur often in the ſame ſentence or paragraph, let it be obſerved, that this uſe can never be made of words but by bad writers, thoſe parts of ſpeech which we call *relatives*, ſuperſeding the neceſſity for any ſuch variation of the ſound, and being abundantly ſufficient for the purpoſe of avoiding the tediouſneſs of repetition of the ſame word, in every caſe, where the tediouſneſs ariſes not from the too frequent repetition of the idea itſelf; in which caſe no variation of ſound will remedy the inconvenience.

CHAP. III.

Of Ambiguity conſequent on the Paucity of Words in a Language.

IF what has been laid down in the foregoing chapters be juſt, it follows, that words perfectly ſynonymous occur only in *different* languages, and that by ſynonymous words in one and the ſame language we are to underſtand words *akin* only in ſignification.

Now, the greater number of ſynonymous words there is in a language, ſo much the more perfect that language is; not becauſe it contains more words than other languages to expreſs the ſame idea (for there would be no uſe or excellence in ſuch a circumſtance) but becauſe more ideas can be expreſſed by it, and that with greater preciſion. For ſynonymous words are introduced into a language for this very end—to anſwer the increaſe and refinement of ideas, and to obviate that ambiguity which would otherwiſe ariſe from one and the ſame term ſtanding for ſeveral different, or differently modified ideas. That ambiguity, or want of preciſion in the communication of ideas by words, is neceſſarily conſequent on a ſcarcity of ſynonymous words in a language, might be collected from what has been argued in the preceding chapter reſpecting the end for which words, whether invented or borrowed, are introduced into a language. It may not be amiſs, however, to go ſomewhat more fully and formally into the proof of this, and to exemplify it in a few inſtances.

Ideas increaſe with the commerce, conveniencies and intercourſe of life. So do words; but not in the ſame proportion. The former are neceſſarily excited by new objects, and immediately on the firſt appearance. But new words to anſwer thoſe ideas neither immediately occur, nor have any neceſſary connection with them. What becomes of theſe new ideas without words? They may remain for ſome time in the mind, contemplated by the individual, and adding to his ſtock of knowledge. It is not always neceſſary nor always proper to communicate them; and, when this is wanted, it is not done at firſt by new words, but either by ſigns, or by a periphraſtical uſe of the old ones.

An infant is not without ideas during his incapacity of expreſſing them by words. Long before he attempts to form articulate ſounds, he makes himſelf underſtood by ſigns, geſtures, or by inarticulate ſounds accompanying them. To theſe ſucceed *words*---words not of his own invention, but ſuch as he finds are already in uſe. He uſes theſe, becauſe he hears them applied to their correſponding objects, and becauſe he can make himſelf underſtood by no other.

Having acquired a few names of things the moſt familiar to him, while theſe names are affixed to the ſame individual objects, he communicates his ideas with certainty and preciſion. But, like his elders, he ſoon deviates into inaccuracy and ambiguity, as his acquaintance with objects enlarges. He preſently applies to things that have a reſemblance to thoſe he has learnt to name, though really different, the ſame names. Thus he becomes, by making one name ſerve for two or more different things, ambiguous in his meaning, and hardly intelligible to thoſe that are not much in his company.

This

This ambiguity ariſes from the paucity of words in *his* language, as we may call it, and is analogous to that which ariſes from the defectiveneſs, in point of ſynonymous words, obſervable in the primœval languages, or language in its earlieſt ſtate. The primœval languages could not be very copious, the manners of men being, in the early ages of the world, ſimple, and their ideas confined and leſs abſtract. This ſimplicity rendered it an eaſy matter to communicate their thoughts. They had no great difficulty either as to the choice of words, or the order of their conſtruction. The common conceptions and unrefined ideas of thoſe they addreſſed, required neither.

But how then, it may be aſked, can ambiguity ariſe from the paucity of words in a language? I anſwer, While words are uſed to expreſs the ſame individual objects, there can be no ambiguity. But when the ſame words are applied to objects ſimilar, though different, they then become ambiguous. And, if a language have but few words, while many objects are expreſſed by it, ſo much the greater muſt the ambiguity be. The primœval languages had but few words; but then the objects to be expreſſed by them were alſo few. This proportion of words to ideas ſerved the purpoſe of communication, in thoſe early ages, without much ambiguity. But when thoſe languages became dead, as we term it, they wanted words—were not copious enough to expreſs the increaſing ideas of modern ages with any preciſion, and to anſwer their refinements in knowledge, and the requiſite diſtinctions to be made amid the variety of objects themſelves, as well as of the different circumſtances, modifications, and views under which thoſe objects were now to be contemplated.

Let us take as an inſtance the firſt expreſſion in the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament—" In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Thus it ſtands in our preſent verſion. But ſome think it would have been more properly rendered—" In the beginning God *formed* the heavens and the earth." The word tranſlated by ſome, *created*, by others, *formed*, is ברא. Now, if the Hebrew language has no other word which conveys peculiarly the idea of *formation*, rather than the idea of *creation*, we are left, under this defect of the language, to collect the exact idea of the writer from ſome other circumſtances in the narrative. But if he has uſed a word which peculiarly implies the act of *creating*, while he would be underſtood to ſpeak only of the firſt *formation* of the heavens and the earth, this would be inaccuracy of writing, and would have a worſe effect, than the imperfection of the language. In this caſe, however, the ambiguity may ariſe neither from a defect in the original, nor inaccuracy in the writer, but from want of ſufficient critical ſkill in his interpreters, or inattention to the proper ſignification and force of Hebrew words.

In the following inſtance the ſentiment of the hiſtorian is ambiguous from a defect of the language itſelf—" And the ſpirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." רוח אלהים, here rendered *the ſpirit of God*, others would have rendered *a great* WIND; and which is the moſt exact tranſlation, I own, appears to me impoſſible to be determined by the conſideration alone of the meaning of the words themſelves.

Another inſtance occurs in Gen. ii. 6. " But there went up a miſt from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground." The Hebrew word ו here rendered firſt by *but*, and afterwards by *and*,

and, is equally capable of a rendering which will preſent us with a ſenſe of this paſſage not only different from, but directly oppoſite to that given by our tranſlators—" *Neither* went there up a miſt from the earth, *to* water the whole face of the ground."

This ambiguity is moſt evidently conſequent upon the paucity of thoſe words in the Hebrew tongue, which ſerve to connect or disjoin words and ſentences; ſo that one and the ſame word admitting a variety of acceptations leaves the reader at a loſs for the exact idea intended to be conveyed by it, and the tranſlators for the preciſe term by which it ſhould be rendered. This Hebrew conjunction, beſides its moſt uſual acceptation *and*, is not unfrequently rendered *but*, *or*, *nor*, *that*, *for*, *thus*, *ſo*, *to*, *then*, *therefore*, and ſeveral other ways.

The want of diſtinct words in this ancient language to expreſs the varied implication of a verb according to its mode or tenſe, occaſions often a doubtful conſtruction. Thus at the 17th verſe of the chapter above-quoted we read—" For in the day that thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely die. מות תמות here rendered, " thou *ſhalt* ſurely die," might with equal propriety (I mean *grammatical* propriety) have been rendered—" thou *wilt* ſurely die;" which would imply not a *threat* or *denunciation* of puniſhment in caſe of tranſgreſſion, but a kind *premonition* to our firſt parent of the fatal effect that would follow his eating of the tree, or trees (for עץ is taken either ſingularly or plurally) marked out for his forbearance, as being of a noxious nature, and whoſe fruit was a *deadly* poiſon.

I ſhall mention but one more out of many other inſtances which might be produced, of ambiguity ariſing from the paucity of words in a language,—" In this thing the Lord pardon thy ſervant, that when

when my maſter goeth into the houſe of Rimmon to worſhip there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myſelf in the houſe of Rimmon: when I bow down myſelf in the houſe of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy ſervant in this thing." 2 Kings v. 18. Naaman, according to this verſion, is repreſented as praying that he may be pardoned if he ſhould, during his attendance upon his maſter in the houſe of Rimmon, bow down and worſhip there, notwithſtanding the profeſſion he had juſt before made—" that he would henceforth offer neither burnt offering, nor ſacrifice unto other Gods, but unto the Lord."

But is it not reaſonable to ſuppoſe that the hiſtorian means to repreſent Naaman as begging pardon for *having done* wrong in this thing, viz. for worſhipping in the houſe of Rimmon rather than for continuing to do what he is now convinced is wrong? The original at leaſt will equally bear this interpretation according to the following conſtruction—" In this thing the Lord pardon thy ſervant, that when my maſter *has gone* into the houſe of Rimmon to worſhip there and he *leaned* on my hand, and I *bowed* myſelf, when I bowed down [*that* I bowed down] myſelf in the houſe of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy ſervant in this thing."

Which of the two conſtructions, however, gives the real ſenſe of the hiſtorian in this paſſage, cannot poſſibly be determined by the force and ſignification alone of the words themſelves. For the verbs in the original ſerve to expreſs the act of the worſhipper either with reſpect to time *preſent*, *paſt*, or *future*.

And thus we ſee, that a language of few ſynonymous words is leſs perfect on that account; as it cannot communicate an equal number of ideas with one that is more copious, nor expreſs them with equal preciſion.

CHAP. IV.

Of Ambiguity in the Uſe of Synonymous Words.

IF, as hath been obſerved, it is one great excellence of a language to abound with ſynonymous words (which circumſtance both gives it copiouſneſs and furniſhes it with materials for elegance as well as preciſion) we find it nevertheleſs ſo liable to injudicious management, as not always to anſwer the end of language better than a leſs copious one. This *muſt* want elegance, and *cannot* be ſucceſsfully employed for accuracy of diſtinction. But neither are accuracy of diſtinction and elegance of diction *neceſſarily* conſequent on a copious language, though moſt advantageous for producing them, any more than good morals are the certain produce of the beſt ſyſtem of ethics, or wiſe conduct of the ſoundeſt philoſophy. And the very circumſtance which gives to a language this great advantage, ſubjects it at the ſame time to frequent miſapplication, as well as to great abuſe and perverſion. For copiouſneſs of language depending on the increaſe and abſtraction of our ideas, there ariſes in conſequence a nearer affinity between words, nicer diſtinctions of their import to be attended to, and, in conſequence of that, more danger of inaccuracy and inelegance in the writer, or of impoſition upon the reader through a promiſcuous uſe, or a wilful abuſe of terms apparently ſynonymous.

In the preceding chapter we have given ſome inſtances of ambiguity neceſſarily conſequent on the paucity of words in a language, particularly the Hebrew, and the difficulty occaſioned thereby,

thereby, of coming with certainty at the meaning of the original. Let us now, on the other hand, in exemplification of what we have juſt now remarked, reſpecting copiouſneſs of language, take notice of ſome improprieties which our tranſlators, in their verſion of the ſacred writings, have fallen into, through an injudicious choice and promiſcuous uſe of words.

Thus, the pronouns *him*, *me*, *thee*, are in ſeveral places improperly uſed for *himſelf*, *myſelf*, *thyſelf*; as, "And David made *him* houſes in the city of David[a]."—"That ſaith, I will build *me* a wide houſe and large chambers, and cutteth *him* out windows[b], &c."—"And he turned *him* unto his diſciples, and ſaid[c]."—"Thou ſhalt not take *thee* a wife[d]."—"Write *thee* all the words that I have ſpoken unto thee in a book[e]."—"Thou ſhalt not make unto *thee* any graven image[f]."

Shall is often uſed where *will* would have been more proper; as, "But if ye *ſhall* ſtill do wickedly, ye ſhall be conſumed, both ye and your king[g]."—"Verily, verily I ſay unto you, that one of you *ſhall* betray me[h]."—"All men will believe on him, and the Romans *ſhall* come, and take away both our place and nation[i]."—"How ſhall it be known what is ſpoken? for ye *ſhall* ſpeak into the air[k]," and in many other places.

May is ſometimes very improperly uſed for *muſt*; as, "Give an account of thy ſtewardſhip; for thou *mayeſt* be no longer ſteward[l]." At other times for *ought* or *can*; as, "But if there be none of theſe things whereof ye accuſe me, no man *may* deliver me unto them[m]."

The

[a] 1 Chron. xv. 1. [b] Jer. xxii. 14. [c] Luke x. 23. [d] Jer. xvi. 2. [e] Jer. xxx. 2. [f] Exod. xx. 4. [g] 1 Sam. xii. 25. [h] John xiii. 21. [i] John xi. 48. [k] 1 Cor. xiv. 9. [l] Luke xvi. 2. [m] Acts xxv. 11.

The prepoſition *by* is ſomewhat improperly uſed for *in*; as, "And he began to ſpeak unto them *by* parables[n];"—for *during*, *for*, or *about*; as, "And God gave unto them Saul, the ſon of Cis, *by* the ſpace of forty years[o]."

The conjunction *becauſe* is often uſed where *that* ſhould ſeem to connect the clauſes in the ſentence more pertinently; as, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, *becauſe* thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent[p]."—"But rather rejoice, *becauſe* your names are written in heaven[q]."—"Moſes gave unto you circumciſion, (not *becauſe* it is of Moſes, but of the fathers)[r]."—"I think myſelf happy, king Agrippa, *becauſe* I ſhall anſwer for myſelf this day before thee[s]."

The pronoun poſſeſſive *his*, which, in its reference, is appropriated to the deſignation of the male ſex, is in many places applied to objects where diſtinction of ſex is not intended to be marked; as if it was ſynonymous with *its*. Thus, in the firſt chapter of Geneſis we meet with the following expreſſions:—"Every winged fowl after *his* kind."—"The living creature after *his* kind."—"Beaſt of the earth after *his* kind."—"Every thing that creepeth upon the earth after *his* kind." So in the twenty-ſecond and twenty-third chapters of Exodus:—"Seven days it ſhall be with *his* dam."—"Thou ſhalt not ſeeth a kid in *his* mother's milk." More improperly ſtill it is applied to objects devoid of ſex[t], as in the firſt of Geneſis—"The fruit tree yielding fruit after *his* kind."—"Herb yielding ſeed after *his* kind;" and in

[n] Mark xii. 1. [o] Acts xiii. 21. [p] Matt. xi. 25. The parallel paſſage in Luke has it *that*.
[q] Luke x. 20. [r] John vii. 22. [s] Acts. xxvi. 2.
[t] Naturaliſts attribute diſtinction of ſex to plants; but that only by way of *analogy* or *aſſimulation* to what obtains in the animal creation, and never make uſe of the *pronoun* to expreſs their fancied diſtinction by.

in the firſt to the Corinthians at the thirty-eighth verſe of the fourteenth chapter—" And to every ſeed *his* own body." With equal impropriety and ſtill greater uncouthneſs it occurs in Exodus—" Of beaten work ſhall the candleſtick be made: *his* ſhaft, and *his* branches, *his* bowls, *his* knops, and *his* flowers ſhall be of the ſame[u]."

Similar to the above is the impropriety of uſing the relative *which* for *who*; as, " The ſame became mighty men, *which* were of old, men of renown[w]."—" Beware of the ſcribes, *which* love to go in long cloathing[x]."—" Our Father *which* art in Heaven[y];" and in ſo many other places, that it would be endleſs to enumerate them, as well as needleſs to add more, than juſt to obſerve, that it occurs no leſs than ſeventy-five times in one chapter[z], and that within the compaſs of ſixteen verſes.

Some of theſe, it ſhall readily be owned, are improprieties which there can be but little danger of any writer falling into, at leaſt, in the uſe of the two words laſt noticed; the diſtinction between them and their reſpective ſynoniſmes, *its* and *who*, being ſufficiently aſcertained and much more obvious *now* than at the time of tranſlating the Bible; at which time, it may deſerve notice, and ſhould be admitted as ſome apology for the tranſlators, the word *its* was hardly in uſe. To paſs then to other inſtances of impropriety in the choice of ſynonymous words.

In interpreting a dead language by a living one, there is danger of employing words that are too limited and appropriate in their ſignification

[u] Exod. xxv. 31. [w] Gen. vi. 4. [x] Mark xii. 38. [y] In each form of the Lord's Prayer. [z] Luke iii.

ſignification to correſpond to the original; which both gives aukwardneſs to the expreſſion, and variation to the ſentiment.

Thus, we are informed according to our tranſlation, that "the Lord God formed man of the *duſt* of the ground[a]." By *duſt*, in our language, is meant very ſmall, looſe, and light particles of matter in oppoſition to what is more moiſt, fixed, firm, and compact; and by *the duſt of* THE GROUND, that kind of it which lies on the ground, and from its dryneſs and want of moiſture, on being moved, readily riſes from it, and floats in the air to the great annoyance oftentimes of the traveller. But it is not likely the hiſtorian intended to ſpecify with ſuch particularity the materials of which man was formed, but only in general, that he was, as the apoſtle Paul expreſſeth it, *of the earth, earthy*.—עפר האדמה[b] a *piece* of the earth, i. e. of the ſame materials with thoſe of which *the earth* is compoſed[c]. The words *duſt* and *ground*, therefore, are improperly choſen for conveying with preciſion the idea of the hiſtorian in this account of the formation of man.

With equal impropriety of expreſſion Adam is repreſented in the next chapter to be admoniſhed by his Maker, of the nature of his frame, and its conſequent certain diſſolution, in theſe words—"For *duſt* thou art, and unto *duſt* ſhalt thou return"---inſtead of—"*Earth*

[a] Gen. ii. 7.

[b] The Hebrew word עפר is not reſtricted in its ſignification to *duſt*, but denotes in general, a *piece*, or pieces (the looſe materials) of the ſubſtance referred to, whether reduced to duſt or not.

[c] האדמה *the* earth, in oppoſition to השמים *the heavens* or *heaven*, from whence the firſt man drew not his origin, agreeably to what St. Paul, alluding to this paſſage, obſerves—"The firſt man is of *the earth*, earthy; the ſecond man is the Lord from *heaven*."

"*Earth*[d] thou art, and to *earth* ſhalt thou return"—or, "*into* earth ſhalt thou *be turned.*"

Not ſo improperly, yet not with ſufficient preciſion, the word *duſt* is made uſe of, in the ſame chapter, to expreſs the idea conveyed by the original עפר, in the following paſſage which contains the ſentence paſſed upon the ſerpent—"Thou art curſed above all cattle, and above every beaſt of the field; upon thy belly ſhalt thou go, and *duſt* ſhalt thou eat all the days of thy life." For the meaning is not, that the ſerpent was ſentenced to feed upon *duſt*, but upon ſuch ſcattered pieces of the *field's* (השדה) produce as are rejected by the very cattle and beaſts of the field—ſuch vile productions of the field as other *reptiles* feed upon, inſtead of thoſe delicious fruits of Eden (for ſuch is probably the contraſt intended) to which in its prior form before it was doomed to *go on his belly*, it had acceſs, and fed upon.

In the third of Geneſis at the ſixth verſe, where it is ſaid—"The woman ſaw that the tree was good for food"—the word *food* is too limited in its implication to anſwer the original word מאכל, which denotes *the act of eating*, or, *that which is eatable* GENERALLY, whether by way of *food* (which reſpects more particularly what we take for the ſuſtenance and ſupport of life, and to ſatisfy the common calls of hunger) or by way of gratifying the appetite,

[d] עפר refers to the word אדמה which occurs in the preceding clauſe of the ſame verſe, and which is properly enough rendered the *ground*—"Till thou return unto the *ground*; for out of it waſt thou taken; for a *piece of the ground*—that is—*earth* (not THE *earth*) thou art." For, as in the foregoing inſtance עפר הארצ ſignifies, what is of THE *earth*, in contraſt to what is of *heaven*, ſo עפר האדמה ſignifies, a portion of *earth* in contradiſtinction to any other *material* ſubſtance.

appetite, and pleaſing the palate. And it ſeems not to be the intention of the hiſtorian to repreſent Eve as diſcerning that the tree bore ſuch fruit as would ſerve for *food*, but only, that it had fruit —ſomething eatable—upon it, in contradiſtinction to other trees which did not bear fruit—were not *fruit-trees*—were not טוב למאכל good for *eating* of.

In the twenty-ſecond chapter at the firſt verſe, we read—"And it came to paſs that God did tempt Abraham,"—where the word *tempt* is uſed ſynonymouſly with *try*; improperly: Seeing God *tempteth* no man, but *tries* all men; *tempt* being reſtricted in its import to ſome view of miſleading a perſon by *enticement* or *deluſive* offers.

The epithet *cunning* is improperly uſed ſometimes for *ſkilful* or *dextrous*; as, "Eſau was a *cunning* hunter[e];" ſometimes for *ingenious*; as, "A *cunning* player on an harp[f]."—"The *cunning* artificer."—"The work of *cunning* men[g];" at other times for *curious*; as, "Cherubims of *cunning* work[h]." The ſubſtantive occurs in Pſalm cxxxvii. with no leſs impropriety, ſtanding for *uſe* or *faculty*—"If I forget thee, O Jeruſalem, let my right hand forget her *cunning*." The adverb alſo is moſt aukwardly uſed for *artfully* in the following expreſſion—"For we have not followed *cunningly* deviſed fables[i]."

The verb *mock* is uſed improperly for *jeſt*; as, "But he ſeemed as one that *mocked* unto his ſons in law[k];" for *diſgrace* or *abuſe* (by an attempt upon chaſtity) as, "See he hath brought in an Hebrew to

[e] Gen. xxv. 27. [f] 1 Sam. xvi. 16. [g] Iſai. iii. 3.—Jer. x. 9. [h] Exod. xxvi. 1.—xxvii. 6. and in many more places. [i] 2 Pet. i. 16. [k] Gen. xix. 14.

to *mock* us[l]."—"The Hebrew ſervant which thou haſt brought unto us, came in unto me to *mock* me[m];" for *to be perverſe* or *ſtubborn*; as, "Balaam ſaid unto the aſs, becauſe thou haſt *mocked* me, I would there were a ſword in mine hand; for now would I kill thee[n];"—for to *deceive* or *impoſe upon*; as, "Delilah ſaid unto Sampſon, Behold thou haſt *mocked* me and told me lies."—"Then Herod, when he ſaw that he was *mocked* of the wiſe men, was exceeding wroth."—"Be not deceived, God is not *mocked*[o]; for to *ſcoff*; as, "The adverſaries ſaw her, and did *mock* at her ſabbaths[p];" for to *deride* or *ridicule*; as, "They bowed the knee before him, and *mocked* him, ſaying, Hail, king of the Jews."—"And when they had *mocked* him, they took off the purple from him."—"Likewiſe alſo the chief prieſts *mocking*, ſaid among themſelves with the ſcribes, He ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave."—"And Herod with his men of war ſet him at nought, and *mocked* him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe."—"And the ſoldiers alſo *mocked* him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar."—"And when they heard of the reſurrection of the dead, ſome *mocked*[q]."

In the thirty-ſixth chapter of Geneſis we read of many dukes,—"*Duke* Teman, *duke* Omar, *duke* Zepho, *duke* Kenaz, &c. &c". The original

[l] Gen. xxxix. 14. [m] Gen. xxxix. 17.

[n] Num. xxii. 29. התעללת בי, literally, "Thou haſt *done ill* by me," *viz.* by his ſtubbornneſs and reſtiveneſs cruſhing Balaam's foot againſt the wall; עלל denoting, when taken in a bad ſenſe, and conſtructed with the propoſition ב, *to abuſe* or *treat ill* in GENERAL, whether by *ſcoffing*, *reproachful language*, *cruelty*, *luſt*, *ſlander*, or any other injurious acts.—See 1 Sam. xxxi. 4.—Jud. xix. 25.

[o] Jud. xvi. 10.—Matt. ii. 16.—Galat. vi. 7. [p] Lamentations i. 7.

[q] Matt. xxvii. 29.—Mark xv. 20, 31.—Luke xxiii. 11, 36.—Acts xvii. 32. In theſe laſt quotations, the acceptation of this verb approaches ſo near to its literal ſenſe, as hardly to be reckoned improper. Nevertheleſs, in none of them is it uſed with ſtrict propriety; to *mock* always implying the idea of contempt or inſult, expreſſed by a ludicrous *repetition* of the perſon's words, or *mimickry* of his actions.

original word here rendered, *Duke*, we cannot ſuppoſe, conveyed the idea which we affix to this title. It denotes, no doubt, a perſon of conſiderable power and authority; but it cannot imply the peculiar privileges and dignity with which the perſonage bearing the title of *Duke* in this realm is inveſted; ſuch a dignity being utterly unknown to the primœval and rude ages. Some word therefore of a more *general* implication of power and authority, as, *Chief*, *Ruler*, *Governor*, or the like, ſhould have been choſen by the tranſlators as more likely to give the ſenſe of the hiſtorian, than ſo modern a title as that of *Duke*.

The verb *intreat* is improperly uſed for *treat*. as, "Hear me, and *intreat* for me to *(with)* Ephron the ſon of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Macpelah[r];"—for *appeaſe*, or *prevail upon by intreaty*; as, "After that, God was *intreated* for the land"—"They cried to God in the battle; and he was *intreated* of them.—"So we faſted and beſought our God for this; and he was *intreated* of us[s];—for *treat*, as, "I will cauſe the enemy to *intreat* thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction"—"And the *remnant*" [awkwardly uſed here for the *reſt*] "took his ſervants, and *intreated* them ſpitefully, and ſlew them."—"But even after that we had ſuffered before, and were ſhamefully *intreated*, as ye know, at Philippi[t]."

The ſubſtantive *feaſt* is uſed ſynonymouſly with *feſtival* in the following paſſages, with great impropriety ſurely; as feaſting was but *one*, though often a *main* circumſtance, in the keeping of a feſtival.—"And thou ſhalt obſerve the *feaſt* of weeks

[r] Gen. xxiii. 8. [s] 2 Sam. xxi. 14.—1 Chr. v. 20.—Ezra viii. 23. and in many other places of the Old Teſtament. [t] Jer. xv. 11.—Matt. xxii. 6.—1 Theſſ. ii. 2.

weeks."—"Theſe are the *feaſts* of the Lord, even holy convocations, which ye ſhall proclaim in their ſeaſons."—"Theſe things ye ſhall do unto the Lord in your *ſet* [more properly, *appointed*] *feaſts*."—"In the *feaſt* of unleavened bread, and in the *feaſt* of weeks, and in the *feaſt* of tabernacles."—"And ſhe wept before him the ſeven days, while their *feaſt* laſted."—"And at that time Solomon held a *feaſt*, and all Iſrael with him, a great congregation—ſeven days and ſeven days, even fourteen days."—"And kept the *feaſt* of unleavened bread ſeven days with joy."—"What will ye do in the ſolemn day, and in the day of the *feaſt* of the Lord."—"Oh Judah, keep thy ſolemn *feaſts*; perform thy vows."—"Not on the *feaſt* day, leſt there be an uproar among the people."—"After two days was the *feaſt* of the Paſſover, and of unleavened bread."—"For of neceſſity he muſt releaſe one unto them at the *feaſt*."—"After this there was a *feaſt* of the Jews; and Jeſus went up to Jeruſalem."—"I muſt by all means keep this *feaſt* that cometh, in Jeruſalem."—"Therefore, let us keep the *feaſt*, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedneſs, but with the unleavened bread of ſincerity and truth[u]."

I ſhall cloſe this enumeration of inſtances of impropriety, inattention, or of an injudicious choice in the uſe of ſynonymous words, with one which, for the ſubject it refers to, may be thought of too great importance to be paſſed by, and more worthy of notice than any we have yet adduced. It occurs in the firſt chapter of the goſpel according to St. John at the third verſe—"All *things* were *made*

[u] Exod. xxxiv. 22.—Lev. xxiii. 4.—Num. xxix. 39.—Deut. xvi. 16.—Jud. xiv. 17.—1 Kings viii. 65.—Ezra vi. 22.—Hoſea ix. 5.—Nahum i. 15.—Matt. xxvi. 5.—Mark xiv. 1.—Luke xxiii. 17.—John v. 1.—Acts xviii. 21.—1 Cor. v. 8. And in many other, if not in *all* the paſſages in which the word occurs.

made by him, and without him was not any thing *made* that was *made*."

From the manner of the expreſſion one would imagine, that the Evangeliſt was here ſpeaking of the creation of the natural frame and ſyſtem of things; whereas from the context it is pretty evident, that he refers to that new ſyſtem which was brought about by the mediation of Chriſt; which at the firſt verſe he had termed, the WORD or *Goſpel*, ὁ λογος, and the publication of which is the ſubject of his ſubſequent narration. This, he would inform us, was *all* of it the work of God; He was the WORD—the original of it, it having been in the *beginning*—before its publication—*with* him—in his eternal counſel. To him therefore was to be aſcribed all that which had been manifeſted to the world by Chriſt Jeſus. It was all of God. This is properly expreſſed in the original by παντα δι αυτου εγενετο, to which our Engliſh verſion—"All things were made by him"—doth by no means correſpond.

Here then, if we have given the true ſenſe of the original, a mere Engliſh reader is miſled by the uſe of the word *made* inſtead of *done*. The expreſſion—"all things were *done* by him"—would hardly have conveyed to an Engliſh reader the idea of the firſt creation, but of ſomething that had been effected or brought to paſs in the world; and this rendering would have been more agreeable to the Greek word εγενετο.

The preciſe meaning of the Evangeliſt would have been ſtill better expreſſed, if the word παντα had been rendered by *all* inſtead of *all* THINGS; which alſo is more agreeable to the original. For though it is in itſelf capable of being rendered either way, yet παντα

with a verb of the ſingular number is more correctly rendered the former way, being taken, like the word *all* by which it is rendered, and which exactly anſwers to it, *univerſally* indeed, but with a *particular reference* to certain things conſidered collectively and as one whole. From this verſion of the original—"*all* was *done* by him" —no one would have ſuppoſed that all things whatſoever now exiſting were meant, but only all *thoſe* things which were the ſubject of the hiſtory.

In giving this comment I am not contending for its being the true ſenſe of this paſſage of ſcripture. It were not to the purpoſe. But I mean to ſhew of what conſequence it is, in interpreting ſcripture, that a proper and chaſte uſe be made of words reckoned ſynonymous. This however may be obſerved (for the remark is full in point) that, if the writer of this goſpel intended to aſcribe to Jeſus Chriſt the creation of the natural ſyſtem of things or the material world, our tranſlators have made a proper choice of words to expreſs his meaning; while he himſelf has not ſo accurately conveyed it in the original. But, on the other hand, if the Evangeliſt meant only to ſpeak of thoſe things which relate to the goſpel-hiſtory, they could hardly have uſed words more directly tending to miſlead the Engliſh reader.

Theſe inſtances of verbal impropriety are ſufficient to ſhew the neceſſity of a careful and diſcriminate choice of words, if we would avail ourſelves of the excellence and advantage which accrues to a language from a copious introduction of ſynonymous words. They are adduced from our preſent verſion of the ſacred writings, not only as being moſt commodious for myſelf to quote from, as well as for the reader to be referred to, but becauſe inſtances ſo much to my preſent

preſent purpoſe were not to be found elſewhere, than in tranſlations from the dead languages, eſpecially from ſo ancient and ſimple a one as the Hebrew. The ſacred writings too ſeemed to merit, by the greater importance of their contents, a preference to my attention; and it is under a ſenſe of their importance and a wiſh to ſee them recommended to more general notice by an accurate reviſal of the language in which they are ſet forth for public uſe, that I purpoſe, as leiſure and occaſion may offer, to contribute my mite of aſſiſtance in furniſhing materials for ſo deſirable a work, by pointing out in alphabetical order more inſtances of impropriety which, though for the moſt part merely verbal, ought not to be deemed immaterial, if ſuch impropriety tend to obſcure, and in ſome places injure the ſenſe, or if it diſguſt the reader by the uncouthneſs of the diction.

CHAP. V.

Of Propriety in the Uſe of Synonymous Words.

ALTHOUGH it has been proved that no two words in the ſame language are perfectly or in every reſpect ſynonymous, yet they may be uſed ſynonymouſly in certain expreſſions without impropriety. For inſtance,

"I *deſign* to go to Town to morrow."
"I *intend* to go to Town to morrow."
"I *purpoſe* to go to Town to morrow."

In theſe expreſſions the three verbs—*deſign*, *intend*, *purpoſe*—are uſed ſynonymouſly, and the meaning is the ſame in each expreſſion. How comes this? Or how can this be, if no two words in the ſame language be perfectly ſynonymous? We account for it thus. All ſynonymous words have ſomething in their implication in *common* with, and ſomething wherein they *differ* from their correſpondents. But it is not neceſſary, that in every ſentence or in every application of them, they ſhould be conſidered under *all* thoſe reſpects in which they differ from each other. It is ſufficient for propriety in the ſynonymous uſe of them, if, in their application to the ſame object, reſpect is had ſolely to their common implication. Thus the verb—to *deſign*—implies, in common with the other two verbs—*intend* and *purpoſe*—the having ſomething in one's mind to effect; and, in its application to the object in the example, viz. to go to Town—requires not our attention to its implication

in

in any other reſpect. But it may be ſo applied as neceſſarily to excite attention to its peculiar or differencing force; in which caſe the uſe of either of the other verbs would be quite improper; e. g. "In this ſolitude he employed his thoughts in *deſigning* a variety of ſchemes and figures for illuſtrating his theory of the heavenly ſyſtem"—Here, *deſigning*, is uſed, though not perhaps with *full*, yet evidently with *more* propriety than either of its ſynoniſmes would be. But in the following ſentence it is uſed with *full* propriety, and in a ſenſe which neither *intend* nor *purpoſe* will bear—"I had built, till the imagination of the architect was exhauſted. I had added one convenience to another, till I knew not what more to wiſh or to *deſign*[w]." In this example an idea is conveyed by the verb, *deſign*, which is not implicated in either of the other verbs, viz. of ſomething to be effected by the power of *fancy*, or the *imagination*, as, *form*, *order*, *arrangement*, *plan*, &c.

An example of the technical uſe of this verb will ſtill more convincingly illuſtrate its characteriſtic implication—"In that collection of prints one in particular attracted his notice. It was indeed an exquiſitely fine piece, and did vaſt credit both to him that *deſigned*, and him that engraved it"—Where *deſigned* evidently denotes an act of the mind employed in *forming* or adjuſting ſomething in its *proper form*, diſtinct from other objects. This peculiar import it receives from its alluſion to the Latin word from whence it is derived—*deſigno*—which conveys the idea of *drawing* or *marking out* an object by lines, figures, or other *ſigns*; and by this alluſion it is diſtinguiſhed not only from the two above-mentioned, but from all other verbs, which may ſeem ſynonymous with it, and have not the ſame derivation.

The

[w] Adventurer, N°. 102.

The verb *intend*, implies in common with the two other verbs—*deſign* and *purpoſe*—the having ſomething in one's mind to effect, but differs from both by an alluſion to the Latin verb—*intendo*—which ſignifies, to *bend* or *ſtretch*, by way of giving greater force and efficacy to an inſtrument made uſe of, as in *bending* a bow or *ſtretching* a ſtring to give it elaſticity or to reach a determined point. It denotes then an act of the mind tending or *ſtretching*, as it were, to an object, or the ſtate of the mind as *bent* upon an object.

And therefore, wherever reſpect is had obviouſly and ſimply to this ſtate of the mind as *immediately* tending to, or bent upon an object, it is more proper to uſe the verb—*intend*—than either of its ſynoniſmes, as in ſuch expreſſions as theſe—"In this anſwer to his inſolent language I cannot ſay, no offence was *intended*, though I came not with a *deſign* to offend."—"All might be well *intended*, but the plan was injudicious, and in ſeveral parts weakly *deſigned*."—"Relief to an individual is all that is *intended* in that act."—"Compaſs, imagine, invent, deviſe, or *intend* death or deſtruction of the perſon of the ſame . . our Sovereign Lord the King, &c[x]."—"Even that friendſhip which *intends* the reward of genius too often tends to obſtruct it[y]."

"Whoſo taſtes,
Inſatiate riots on the ſweet repaſts;
Nor other home, nor other care *intends*,
But quits his houſe, his country, and his friends[z]."

It is this implication of an alluſion to its derivation which makes the verb *intend* capable of being applied technically to inanimate objects, and metaphorically to animals merely inſtinctive, to neither of which we attribute the faculty of *deſigning* or *purpoſing*.—"By this

[x] Lord Grenville's Bill, 1796. [y] Rambler, N°. 111. [z] Pope.

this the lungs are *intended* or remitted[a]."—" Magnetiſm may be *intended* and remitted, and is found only in the magnet and in iron[b]."

" The ſame advancing high above his head,
With ſharp *intended* ſting ſo rude him ſmote,
That to the earth him drove, as ſtricken dead[c]."

The verb, to *purpoſe*, comes from the ſubſtantive, *purpoſe*, and implies, in common with the two other verbs, *deſign* and *intend*; the having ſomething in one's mind to effect, but differs from both by an alluſion to the Latin word, *propoſitum*, which ſignifies that which is *put forth*, *put before*, or *put for*, i. e. ſo as to be at hand *for* uſe; and ſo it denotes an act of the mind *putting*, as it were, an object before itſelf, or *putting* itſelf *forth*, or *putting* itſelf in readineſs *for*, or (which is the ſame thing in mental operations) the ſtate of the mind as *put*, as it were, upon ſomething to be effected. It is this alluſion to the word from which it is derived, which gives a propriety to the uſe of it rather than of its ſynoniſmes in ſuch ſentences where reſpect is had ſimply to the *poſition* of the mind, or of the object in the mind. Hence we can ſay with more propriety,—" I *firmly purpoſe* it," than " I *firmly deſign*" or " I *firmly intend* it."—" He is of a fickle and inconſtant diſpoſition, ever wavering and *unſteady* in what he *purpoſeth*." Hence alſo it is that we can ſay with *ſome* propriety—" I am purpoſed to behave better in future."—" I have ſworn, and am *ſtedfaſtly purpoſed* to keep thy righteous judgments[d]"—that is—ſtedfaſtly *fixed* or *ſettled* in my mind, or, have it fixed or ſettled in my mind, &c. but with *no* propriety—" I am ſtedfaſtly *intended* or ſtedfaſtly *deſigned*, &c."

Thus

[a] Hale. [b] Newton's Optics. [c] Spencer's Fairy Queen.
[d] Pſalm cxix. 106. Old Verſion.

Thus we ſee that theſe three words—*deſign*, *intend*, *purpoſe*,—are far from being *perfectly* or in every reſpect ſynonymous; and that they are then only uſed ſynonymouſly with propriety (or rather without impropriety) when the expreſſions in which they occur require not particular attention to their diſtinguiſhing implication, or in which the diſtinguiſhing idea conveyed by each makes no ſtriking and eſſential variation of the ſentiment. Yet we are not to conclude from hence, that theſe words, or any other words which we call ſynonymous, do ever loſe or ever can loſe that import or idea which is *peculiar* to them. In the three examples we have adduced of their ſynonymous uſe, each retains its differencing note or character. Thus the expreſſion—"I *deſign* to go to Town to-morrow,"—is, in *ſtrictneſs* of interpretation, I have that thing *marked*, as it were, in my mind.—"I *intend* to go, &c."—that is, I have my mind *bent*, or I am *bent*, as it were, upon it—my thoughts *tend* thither.—"I *purpoſe* to go, &c."—that is, in *ſtrictneſs*, I am *ſettled* in my mind, or I have it *put*, as it were, in my mind to go thither.

CHAP. VI.

Mode of Explanation—What moſt proper to be adopted.

WHAT has been obſerved in the foregoing chapters, more particularly in the two firſt, leads to this concluſion: That the method, on which all our Dictionarians generally proceed—of explaining one word by another—is not only defective but erroneous. In Dictionaries which give the ſenſe of the words of one language in the terms of another, this mode of explanation is not equally objectionable, nay, in many inſtances it is both neceſſary and moſt proper; as every language muſt have words to which the ſame ideas are affixed with thoſe that are conveyed by words of a different language. Thus, the idea affixed to the Engliſh word *water*, is the ſame with that which is conveyed by the word *eau* in French, *aqua* in Latin, ὕδωρ in Greek, and מים in Hebrew. So that each of thoſe foreign words are ſufficiently explained in Engliſh by the ſingle term *water*; becauſe they are each perfectly ſynonymous with it. But how can the word *water* be explained in an Engliſh Dictionary in this way? Or what other *ſingle* word ſhall we find in our language that conveys preciſely the ſame idea? It is impoſſible to find one. For it will not ſurely be thought to be properly and fully explained by either of the terms *Sea*, or, *Urine*[e]. It follows, that it muſt be explained *periphraſtically*, i. e. in more terms than one.

[e] Vide *Johnſon*'s Dictionary on the word.

Let us ſee then what is neceſſary to a full and accurate explanation of a word delivered in terms of the ſame language, ſo far as the Synonymiſt is concerned. The explanation of a word ſhould be ſo comprehenſive as to include the idea which it conveys in *common* with any other word of the ſame part of ſpeech, and that by which it is *diſtinguiſhed* from all other words, and ſo definite as to exclude any other ideas than what are eſſential to it: in other words, we muſt give its *general* and its *ſpecial* import.

It may be thought, that this mode of explanation is impracticable, and too abſtract to be accomodated to the ſubject we are upon—that words may be *explained*, but are not to be *defined*, nor the ſenſe of them to be aſcertained with mathematical exactneſs, or illuſtrated by rules of the Diagnoſtic art. So I uſed to think, and ſo all our Dictionarians ſeem to think, who, when they do not explain a word by merely giving its ſynoniſme, the impropriety of which has been already noticed, content themſelves for the moſt part with enumerating the various ſenſes in which it is uſed in *common* with many other words, or with giving its ſenſe in terms ſo vague and indefinite, as will ſuit ſome other word as well or better than that which is to be explained by them. But, though it ſhould be granted that we cannot in the way propoſed determine with mathematical exactneſs, it will not be eaſy to ſhew how we can explain words with more preciſion, or indeed with preciſion at all, in any other way.

But the truth is, the explanation of words, ſo far at leaſt as the Synonymiſt is concerned, falls as properly under the Diagnoſtic art as the definition of terms in any other ſcience whatever, and how abſtract ſoever. For what is the Diagnoſtic art, but the art of *diſ-*

tinguiſhing

tinguiſhing one object from another, and that by conſidering them *generally* and *ſpecially*, or arranging them under their reſpective *genera* and *ſpecies*. And is not this done in other ſciences beſides thoſe we call *abſtract*? Is it not done in Entomology, Ornithology, Botany, &c.? And why not then in Philology, or the Science of Words? In giving a Geometrical definition we proceed on the ſame principle as in a Botanic deſcription. The Botaniſt, to deſcribe the plant which bears the name, for example, of *Narciſſus*, or to explain that *word*, employs ſuch a term or terms, as may include all the ideas which it conveys in *common* with any other name of a plant in the general order, diviſion, or arrangement to which it belongs—that is—he gives firſt its *general* character, and calls it an *herbaceous* plant. This term, *herbaceous*, diſtinguiſhes it from *trees* and *ſhrubs*, but includes the idea it conveys in *common* with the name of every other plant. To diſtinguiſh further, he next employs a term of leſs general import, and adds to the deſcription, *bulbous*. Theſe characters being common to the *Narciſſus* with a ſtill numerous tribe of plants, it is more ſpecially diſtinguiſhed by its bulb being *coated*. The ideas which the foregoing terms convey, the word *Narciſſus* conveys in *common* ſtill with ſome others, as, the Hyacinth, Tulip, Crocus, Snow-drop, &c. He therefore proceeds to name the character which is *peculiar* to it as a *Narciſſus*, and adds, that it bears a *cup* in the *center* of the *flower* (or *corolla*.)

Having now arrived at a character which diſtinguiſhes it from every other plant with which it may have any thing in common, he has nothing further to add. The deſcription is complete—that is—ſo far as the Botaniſt is concerned, which is, to *define* the term *Narciſſus*, or to diſtinguiſh the plant which bears that name from every other plant, viz. "*Narciſſus* is the name of an *herbaceous*

 plant,

plant, having a *coated bulb*, and a *cup* growing out of the *center* of the *flower* (or *corolla*)[f]." If to this deſcription we ſhould add any *more* terms, as that a *Narciſſus* bears a *ſingle ſtem*, with ſometimes a *ſingle*, ſometimes *two* or *more* flowers, &c. &c. all this, though true, would be not only unneceſſary, but render the deſcription vague and indiſtinct, confounding alſo the generic with the ſpecific name.

In the ſame manner the Geometrician propoſeth his definitions. To define a *Triangle*, for inſtance (which is but to *explain* that *word*), he uſes ſuch a term as includes all the ideas which the word *Triangle* conveys in *common* with any other term in the general order, diviſion, or arrangement to which it belongs—that is—he firſt mentions the *order* or *genus* to which it belongs, and ſays, that it is a *figure*. This includes all the ideas which the word *Triangle* conveys in *common* with any other term in that *order*, as, *circle*, *ſquare*, *pentagon*, *ellipſe*, &c. and at the ſame time diſtinguiſhes it from all other terms in the ſcience which convey not the idea of *ſpace incloſed*, as, *point*, *line*, *angle*, &c. He then employs ſuch terms as may convey that idea which is *peculiar* to a *Triangle*, and diſtinguiſhes it from *every other* figure. This is done by adding to the general term, *figure*, its being contained under *three angles*, viz. "A *Triangle* is a *figure* contained under three angles;" and to add more to the definition would be either unneceſſary, or would defeat the end of a definition.

The ſame mode of explanation may with no leſs propriety be adopted by the Philologiſt. Let us take for inſtance the firſt word in our Dictionaries—*A*, or *An*. To explain this word, we mention in the firſt place its *general* implication, or the idea which it conveys

[f] Ray's Hiſtory of Plants, London, 1688, vol. ii. p. 1130.

veys in *common* with any other word to which it bears ſome affinity, —that is—we refer it to one of thoſe known and eſtabliſhed *claſſes* or *diviſions* of words, called *parts of ſpeech*, to which it belongs, and ſay that it is an *article*. This term diſtinguiſhes it at once from all the words which are arranged under any other diviſion, as, *nouns*, *verbs*, *prepoſitions*, &c. but includes the idea which the word conveys in *common* with all words of the ſame part of ſpeech, which in this caſe happen to be no more than two, *viz. the* and *to*. To diſtinguiſh it therefore further, we add to the general idea ſuggeſted by the term *article*, that it announceth a *ſubſtantive*. This diſtinguiſhes it from the latter of theſe articles, which ſerves to announce a *verb*. We have ſtill to give its *ſpecific* character, or that by which it is diſtinguiſhed from the remaining article, *the*, and conſequently from every other word whatſoever in the Engliſh language; and this is done by adding to the foregoing, the terms *ſingularly* and *indefinitely*. This compleats the explanation, which now exhibits a *full* and *accurate* idea of the word under conſideration, viz. "*A* is an *article* ſerving to announce a *ſubſtantive ſingularly* and *indefinitely*."

Thus it appears, that the objects of other ſciences than thoſe we call *abſtract*, are capable of being diſtinguiſhed and illuſtrated in the way we propoſed, viz. by reducing them to their reſpective *genera* and *ſpecies*, or exhibiting their *general* and *ſpecial* implications.

It is true, that in the Diagnoſtic deſcription of *natural* objects, as of that we have deſcribed above—a *Narciſſus*—we can diſtinguiſh neither in ſo conciſe a manner, nor with ſo great preciſion and certainty as in definitions of objects more abſtract. But the *principles* on which we proceed are the ſame. They are the ſame which

muſt

muſt guide us in the inveſtigation and illuſtration of the ſenſe and meaning of words, if we would treat of them ſcientifically. For, be the *objects* of one Science ever ſo different from thoſe of another, Science itſelf is one and the ſame, and in its nature *abſtract*. It conſiſts in inveſtigating the nature, properties, and relations of things by deduction from ſettled and acknowledged premiſes; nor can it be communicated otherwiſe than by means of *abſtraction*.

CHAP. VII.

Objections anſwered.

NOTWITHSTANDING what has been urged in the preceding chapter by way of obviating the objection to the Diagnoſtic method of interpreting a language, viz. by *defining* words, I am aware of a very ſpecious exception being taken againſt the plea for it as equally practicable, or conſiſtent, with that which is obſerved in other ſciences. In explaining the terms, or deſcribing the objects of other ſciences, no words, it may be ſaid, are employed, whoſe meaning is not either ſuppoſed to be underſtood, or has not been previouſly ſettled and defined. In the definition of a *Triangle*, the words, *figure* and *angle*, as being objects of the ſcience of Geometry, are previouſly defined before they are admitted as a part of the definition of a Triangle, and all the other words, not conſidered as ſuch, are ſuppoſed to be underſtood; and therefore, it may be thought, are conſiſtently employed to explain what is not ſuppoſed to be known. The ſame rule obtains in Botany, as appears from the inſtance we have given of the definition of the term *Narciſſus*, and may be conſiſtently adopted in any other ſcience, *Language* alone excepted. For in explaining words we employ words which themſelves are to be explained, and are obliged ſometimes to admit into the explanation the very word we are explaining; which is the caſe in the inſtance we gave of explaining the word *a* or *an*. And is not this, it may be ſaid, to define in a circle, and to explain *ignotum per ignotum?*

To

To which we anſwer: That the mode we propoſe to follow in explaining words and that which is obſerved in what is called *definition*, will appear to be parallel, if we diſtinguiſh rightly the words employed in either caſe, as to the *uſe* and purpoſe which they ſerve. For ſome of the words in the foregoing definition of *A*, ſhould be conſidered as *ſcientific terms* previouſly defined by Grammarians, as much as the words *angle* and *figure*, which occur in the definition of a *Triangle*; ſuch are the terms, *article*, *ſubſtantive*, *ſingular*; and, for the other words, why may we not ſuppoſe their meaning to be ſo far underſtood, as to ſerve the purpoſe of explaining the word in queſtion equally with thoſe which the Geometrician or the Botaniſt takes for granted are underſtood? Is it not, we may aſk, as conſiſtent in us to employ the word *indefinitely*, in giving the diſtinguiſhing idea conveyed by the word *an*, as in the Geometrician to employ the word *infinite* in his Poſtulatum, "that a right line may be *infinitely* produced," or to define a line by "length without breadth," before either of the words *length* or *breadth* have been previouſly defined? Nor ſhould it be eſteemed an infraction of the rule to be obſerved in the caſe of definition, that we admit the very word we are defining, ſo long as it is not employed as a *term* of the definition, but only taken in its *general* acceptation in common with the other words ſuppoſed to be underſtood. It doth not, properly ſpeaking, make a part of the definition, but is only a member of the ſentence or expreſſion containing the definition. So that this accidental admiſſion of it to ſerve the common purpoſe of language affects not the *principle* on which the explanation is conducted, the *general* and *ſpecial* terms, or *definitory* words (which is all the Synonomiſt is concerned with) being, in this inſtance, no more confounded with the other words ſerving a different

purpoſe,

purpoſe, than they are in the inſtance of the mode of defining obſerved by the Geometrician, or the Botaniſt.

The Objector, whom this anſwer doth not ſatisfy, we may with reaſon call upon to ſhew (what we repeat it will not be eaſy to ſhew) " how we can explain words with more preciſion, or indeed with preciſion at all, in any *other* way;"—To which we have further to add that, if the objection be allowed any weight, it will ſeem to lye againſt the practicability of explaining words at all by means of *language*, of *that* language at leaſt of which they are a part.

CHAP. VIII.

Summary View of the Object of the Work, and Manner of its Execution.

THE ſtatement made in Chap vi. of what is requiſite to conſtitute a full and accurate explanation of a word, is to be underſtood of its *literal* ſenſe. For *that* only we propoſe to inveſtigate and ſet forth in the explication. The Philologiſt is not concerned with the *figurative* ſenſes in which a word may be uſed, any farther than as attention to, and examination of the propriety or impropriety in the uſe of it, may ſerve to elucidate its *literal* or proper ſignification. The technical uſe of a word is alſo, no farther than this, in the plan of our undertaking; and we ſcarce need to adverti̇ſe the reader, that he is not to expect from us an account of *all* the words in our language. Proper names of perſons, places, offices, terms appropriated to particular arts, ſciences, profeſſions, orders, ranks in ſociety; in ſhort, whatever words regard not human intercourſe at large, or ſerve not the purpoſe of *general* communication, will be either wholly omitted, or ſo far only conſidered as they are connected with the general principles on which we purpoſe to proceed; and many of thoſe words, which might fall properly within our plan, we ſhall find ourſelves under the neceſſity of omitting, not leſs for want of time and leiſure from occupations more immediately incumbent upon us thoroughly to inveſtigate, than, alas! for want of ability to explain with that preciſion and certainty which we could wiſh, and have attempted in what has been done.

To our account of a word, and the authorities adduced in ſupport of it, we have not unfrequently (indeed we have almoſt conſtantly) ſubjoined notes and remarks upon both. This ſeemed neceſſary as well more fully to convey our meaning (for which the conciſeneſs uſed in a formal definition, though aided by proper examples, is not always ſufficient), as in juſtification of the ſenſe given, and to contraſt it with what we apprehend to be an erroneous or leſs accurate account.

In this part of our work we have gone into a minuteneſs and prolixity which may appear unneceſſary, and to readers of a certain complexion we fear will be diſguſting. For this we ſhall not ſtay to apologize farther than to ſay that, on a ſubject of this nature, we knew not how to diſpenſe with it, without erring on the other hand, and incurring danger of cenſure for deficiency of diſcuſſion, and not doing our utmoſt to ſatisfy the more *critical* enquirer, whoſe approbation we chiefly covet, and cannot hope to merit but by induſtry of reſearch and elaborate inveſtigation.

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